

Book Reviews

Quintin Barry. *From Ushant To Gibraltar: The Channel Fleet 1778-1783*. Warwick, UK: Helion & Company, Ltd., www.helion.co.uk, 2022. 364 pp., illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. UK £25.00, paper; ISBN: 978-1-915070-39-5. (E-book available.)

From Ushant To Gibraltar is a study of the men and actions of the Channel Fleet from 1778-1783. There are two reasons why readers of this journal would be interested in this book. The primary one is for its study of the Royal Navy during those six key years. A secondary reason is to better appreciate the American Revolution in its global context.

Chapter One is a brief biography of John Montagu, First Earl of Sandwich, a British politician who served in a number of cabinet positions, specifically as First Lord of the Admiralty on three occasions, most significantly in Lord North's Ministry. In that position, Montagu was a leader in the effort to rebuild a neglected naval force to both defend Britain and to project its power overseas. He will continue to appear throughout the book. The next chapter presents the civilians and officers who led the Navy and Chapter Three, the admirals who commanded. After that, is the tale of Charles Middleton, who, seasoned by sea service, assumed the position of Comptroller where he achieved the technological advance of coppering hulls. Chapter Five details the state of tactics and signaling in 1778. In Chapter Six, the focus changes to an examination of the French Navy, followed by a similar treatment of the Royal Navy from 1763-1778. Chapter Eight addresses Britain's war strategy of Britain, and the final chapter, that of France.

Having set the scene by describing the forces and introducing the principal characters, the text proceeds into sailings and actions in European, West Indian, and American waters. The first major engagement chronicled is the Battle of Ushant of July 1778, named for the island off Brest, France. Both fleets suffered extensive physical damage which set off a series of analyses,

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recriminations, and British courts martial.

A Franco-Spanish coalition devised plans for a Combined Fleet. The threat of a 1779 invasion of the British Isles put pressure on the Royal Navy as Britain's primary defense. Pressure eased as dissention and illness wracked the Combined Fleet, but battles still loomed. The Spanish Fleet was defeated in the Moonlight Battle off Cape St. Vincent on 16 December 1779.

With the threat of invasion averted, Captain of the Fleet, Rear Admiral Richard Kempenfelt, turned to much needed reforms of signaling, coppersing of the fleet and organizational authority. Other challenges arose as Gibraltar needed relief and the Netherlands' declaration of war against Britain set off a war in the North Sea that proved disastrous to the Dutch economy. The narrative continues with the fall of Lord North's ministry in the wake of disappointing news from America in 1782 and concludes with an account of Admiral Viscount Howe's command of the Channel Fleet through the indecisive engagement off Cape Spartel after which Howe returned to political life on his way to becoming First Lord of the Admiralty.

Author Quintin Barry has drafted a intensely researched account, supplemented by portraits and sketches of prominent figures and tables documenting the British and French Fleets at the Battle of Ushant. The bibliography provides a guide to further reading. There is both a general index and an index of ships. Barry's experience as a retired solicitor is reflected in his account of the courts martial, as it was in *Disputed Victory*, which I also reviewed for *Northern Mariner*.

I recommend *From Ushant To Gibraltar* to readers with a deep interest in the late- eighteenth-century Royal Navy and its connection to the politics of the era. You will love the detail of cruises, actions, technological advances, officers, and enemies. With my American orientation, I have heard and read that the American Revolution was a relatively small part of a world-wide war, but this tome supports that general statement with eye-opening facts. I gained a deeper appreciation of the motives of America's French, Spanish and Dutch allies. Patient readers can derive similar benefit.

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Malcolm Batten. *Shipping on the Thames and the Port of London during the 1940s to 1980s, a Pictorial History.* Barnsley, S. Yorks: Pen and Sword Transport, www.pen-and-sword.co.uk, 2022. 232 pp. illustrations, maps, bibliography. UK £30.00, CDN \$46.00, cloth; ISBN 978-1-39901-840-1. (E-book available.)